



Working Lands Alliance
A Project of American Farmland Trust

Date: March 7, 2011

To: Environment Committee

HB 6262: AN ACT CONCERNING THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACCOUNT

Submitted by: Ben Bowell, Acting Project Director, Working Lands Alliance

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Working Lands Alliance, a statewide coalition of caring individuals and more than 200 organizations and businesses working together to raise awareness of the need and importance of saving Connecticut's valuable and vanishing farmland.

The continuation of the dairy support program under the Community Investment Account is a top legislative priority of the Working Lands Alliance.

Signed into law in 2005, the Community Investment Act (CIA) is a landmark piece of legislation which helps further the goals of protecting and preserving the beauty and unique character of Connecticut for future generations. The CIA provides increased funding for a wide range of agriculture viability, dairy farm support, historic preservation, open space, and affordable housing programs. The CIA has been a tremendous success and as of January 2011 has provided over \$47 million through granting programs to 562 projects in 145 towns in Connecticut. Over \$82 million in funds from private, federal, and local sources have been raised to match the state's CIA dollars.

The Community Investment Act has created an unprecedented coalition of farmers, environmentalists, historic preservationists, and housing advocates which strongly agree that dairy farmers should continue to be supported through this program.

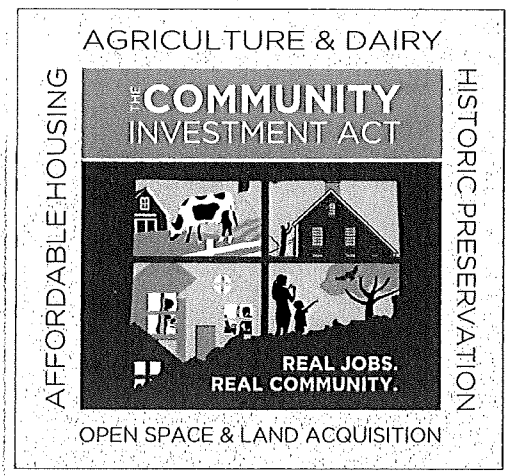
Connecticut's dairy industry contributes over \$1.1 billion to the state's economy and employs over 4,000 people. Dairy farms steward over 70,000 acres of farmland and provide fresh, local milk to residents.

Due to a federal milk pricing system which does not account for the high cost of production in our region, Connecticut dairy farmers are often losing money when they produce milk. A change to the CIA in 2009 created the Agriculture Sustainability Account to help correct this disadvantage and saved our state's 157 dairy businesses.

This program will expire July 1, 2011. WLA strongly supports the removal of this sunset provision and continuation of the state's policy of funding a dairy farm safety net. This program will strengthening the general health of the agriculture industry in Connecticut by sustaining a major user of agriculture inputs and services, while also stabilizing a critical mass of farmland with potential to be preserved.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on this important issue.

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IT'S A SIMPLE EQUATION...



You know that CIA funds are used for land preservation, historic preservation, and affordable housing...

...but you may NOT know that:

- ☐ Since 2006, some 2000 jobs have been created in the affordable housing and historic preservation sectors due to CIA projects, including jobs for construction workers, architects, engineers, historic consultants, plumbers, electricians, masons, and jobs in the tourism industry.
- ☐ The \$873 million outdoor recreation industry and the \$3.5 billion dollar agricultural industry, which together generate 28,000 jobs, is strengthened by CIA investments in local farm businesses and land protection.
- ☐ 157 dairy farm businesses were saved with CIA support payments.

The Community Investment Act has exceeded all expectations by stimulating a distinct economic sector - the Community Investment Sector. **200% in matching funds from private, federal, and local sources have been raised to match the state's CIA dollars.**

A portion of every CIA dollar collected has stayed in the local community for capital investment. The rest has provided critical funding for **CIA projects in nearly every town and city in the state.**

THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT • PA 05-228 • PA 09-3

AGRICULTURE VIABILITY & DAIRY FARMING • HISTORIC PRESERVATION • OPEN SPACE • AFFORDABLE HOUSING
LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS • TOWN CLERK RECORDS MANAGEMENT

www.communityinvestmentact.org